UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Wichita City Hall is a three-story building with a full basement. Built of rough cut stone blocks, its walls are 18 inches thick and lined with two courses of brick. At the four corners of the structure are round towers with conical roofs, and in the center is a large square clock tower with a pyramidal tar roof. Four magnificent entrance ways are centered on the four sides between the corner towers. (However there is no door or entrance arch on the south side.) A gable roof covers each entrance way. Window styles in the building range from rectangular with arched or horizontal lintels to completely semicircular light openings.

The stone facades are intricately detailed. The stones themselves are laid in alternating wide and narrow courses. Each floor of the towers and entry ways is separated by a course of beautifully carved stone in a leaf pattern. There is also detailed stone work along the cornice. Both the west front entry way and the northwest corner tower have false porches at the second floor level.

The central clock tower, six stories in height, has eight keyhole-shaped arches--two on each side--plus a flat protruding arch above each pair. Each corner of the clock tower has a cylindrically shaped tower which is capped by a multilayered top resembling a crown. Similar crowns top the west entry way. Clock faces eight feet in diameter are mounted on each of the four sides. The clock tower, like all the towers, is made of rough cut stone.

The exterior of the building is basically original except for minor repairs; however the original slate roof has been replaced by one of rubber. In 1938 an annex was built to the east of the city hall and connected to it. The annex has three stories and is also made of stone; the north front is of smooth cut stone while the other three sides are rough cut.

The interior has been remodeled and modernized a number of times. Wichita City Hall, a good example of a government building designed in the "Richardsonian style," has been called a "masterpiece of the stonecutter's art."

8.

PERIOD (Check One of More as	s Appropriate)		
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Construction of the Wichita City Hall was authorized by a bond election in November, 1889, and plans were formally accepted by the city council December 9, 1889. Acquisition of land at the southeast corner of Main and William began three days later. Total cost of the site was \$19,500. The architectural firm selected by the city council on December 20, was Proudfoot and Bird of Philadelphia. The building was designed in the "Richardsonian Style," which featured heavy stone work, tall Norman towers, and graceful Roman arches. The contract stipulated that Proudfoot and Bird could not charge more than five per cent of the \$70,000 allocated from public funds to complete the building. On January 1, 1890, the council selected R. Rogers as the contractor. bid of \$61,965 was later revised to \$64,665 by mutual agreement when it was determined that Cambridge stone from Cowley county should be used instead of Augusta stone from Butler county because of the former's greater durability. The adjustment in the bid was made because of the greater distance of Cambridge from Wichita.

The cornerstone was laid in 1890 when George W. Clement was mayor. He is given much of the credit for making the city hall a reality. Construction was completed in 1892 and the building was accepted by the council on March 28. Cost of the city hall construction is variously given from \$75,000 to \$150,000. Final payments on the bonds were made in 1928. Apparently no city administration was greatly concerned about paying off the bonds and simply refunded them as they came due. It was not until Wichita changed its municipal government to the city manager form that efforts were made to pay for the building. By the time it was paid for interest costs had amounted to as much as the original cost of construction. A Seth Thomas clock and a bell were installed in the tower in 1917. The first elevator was installed in 1940, eliminating the use of the circular staircase, from first to fourth floors, under the clock tower.

One of the more interesting episodes in the building's history was the 1910 affair of the "hidden room," which was built in one corner of the electrician's room in the basement. Allegedly the fire chief and the former police chief had furnished it and used it for immoral and illegal activities. After the press published the story, the room was torn out.

As Wichita's population increased, the city hall became increasingly crowded. When remodeling projects could no longer provide adequate space, some changes were made. Various departments moved to other

9.	MAJOR BIBL	IOGRAPHIC	CALR	EFERENCE	ES				\cup	
	Bentley,	Orsemus	н.,	editor,	History	of	Wichita	and	Sedgwick C	county

(Chicago, C. F. Cooper and Co., 1910), pp. 241, 242.

"City Hall, Built in 1892, Has Watched Wichita's Growth, Wichita Sunday Eagle, July 27, 1947.

"Hidden Room Investigators File Official Report of Their Findings", Wichita Eagle, Oct. 19, 1910.

Illuminated Resume of City of Wichita (Wichita, Chamber of Commerce, n.d., ca. 1900's),p. 3.

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STAT. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL L. PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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facilities and an adjacent building was constructed to house the police department directly east of the city hall.

This massive castle-like structure with its tower and turrets has been a Wichita landmark since 1892 as well as the center of Wichita's municipal government. It is a well-kept example of the "Richardsonian Style;" not many public buildings of this type were built in the Midwest although the style was quite popular in the East.

9.

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"Our Historic City Hall--a Monument in Store", Wichita Beacon, Feb. 21, 1966.

"Welcome to Wichita," 8 page brochure (Wichita, n. p., 1970).

UNITED STAT DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NAME : PARK SERVICE: